

from psychology, as Calvinism tends to do. But conceiving of psychology as a mere matter of mechanism, not taking into account the moral quality of acts or their intimate resonance . . . leads directly to the picaresque.

"No more sin! Everything goes!" The author of *La Maitresse americaine* and of *La Turque*¹⁸ now wants Phedre without blushes, Prometheus without his vulture, Andromache without resistance, Orestes without his Erinyes. And he thinks he is freeing literature in this way. I am not surprised that he should cry out: "At times I feel a profound need of lyricism!" I should think so! I believe, however, that the word *profound* is an overstatement.

14 May

Last night went with M. to Piot's. He is leaving soon for Florence with a new collection of drawings that he wants to show me even more than I want to see them. They are studies for the new frescoes he is getting ready for. The drawings lack the decisive quality, the gravity, even the attractiveness of the first ones. 'They are *broad*, don't you think?' Piot keeps repeating by way of eliciting a compliment that I cannot pay him. Easier perhaps, and as people pleasantly say: *Tbappier*"—which means achieved with an ever decreasing effort. But I should like to see him tend toward severity. It was becoming for him to remain close to the masters; their intelligence advantageously supplemented his (which is only mediocre). As he stretches out, he clearly exhibits a rather vulgar nature that only the most rigorous art could develop properly.

23 May

Were I to die today, my entire work would disappear behind *La Porte etroite*; the world would pay attention to it alone.

Obviously the word *cad*,** which Copeau used last night, applies almost exactly to Montfort. His article is not so bad as they claim it to be.

In other words, it is precisely what it aims to be:
harmful. I write my
books so slowly that I often let the epoch catch up with
me until I seem
to be borne along by it, whereas I was originally
reacting against it.

30 May

I shall probably be obliged to write a preface for my
*Aveugle*TM-
which otherwise would only add to the confusion.

¹³ Two novels by Eugene Montfort; *The American
Mistress* and *The
Turkish Woman*.

¹⁴ The slang word *pignouf* is used in the text.
¹⁵ Doubtless an early tide for *La Symphonie
pastorale* (*The Pastoral
Symphony*), first published in 1919.